

"Ralph," he said, "Ralph, do you hear me?"

Then he raised his face a little and watched.

The eyelids were rising slowly; but they dropped again; and there came a little faint babbling from the writhing lips; but no words were intelligible. Then they were silent.

"He hears," said Beatrice softly.

The priest bent low again; and as he did so, from outside came a strange sound, as of a long monstrous groan from a thousand throats. Again the dying man stirred; his hand sought his brother's arm and gripped it with a kind of feeble strength; then dropped again on to the coverlet.

Chris hesitated a moment, and again glanced up; and as he did so, there was a sound on the stairs. He threw himself back on his heels and looked round, as the doctor came in with Morris behind him.

He was a stout ruddy man, and moved heavily across the floor; but Ralph seemed not to hear it.

The doctor came to the end of the bed, and stood staring down at the dying man's face, frowning and pursing his lips; Chris watched him intently for some sign. Then he came round by Beatrice, leaned over the bed, and took Ralph's wrist softly into his fingers. He suddenly seemed to remember himself, and turned his face abruptly over his shoulder to Sir James.

"There is a man come from the palace," he whispered harshly. "I suppose it is the pardon." And Chris saw him arch his eyebrows and purse his lips again. Then he bent over Ralph once more.

Then again the doctor jerked his head towards the window behind and spoke across to Chris.

"They have him out there," he said; "Master Cromwell, I mean."